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The Reptile´s Eye Glyph: The Calendar Name of the Butterfly Bird God in Teotihuacan and during the Epiclassic Period

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Abstract. This work starts with a discussion of how to distinguish between gods and mortals in Teotihuacan art, and a review of the myth of the Butterfly Bird God. Subsequently, based on an analysis of different iconographic contexts in which the Butterfly Bird God is observed in Teotihuacan art, I propose that the Reptile's Eye glyph may have functioned as the name of this deity. I also establish the existence of images of the Butterfly Bird God in the Epiclassic Period which are accompanied by the Reptile's Eye glyph, on the Ixtapaluca Plaque and Xochicalco Stela 1, and propose a new interpretation for the Xochicalco triad of stelae. As the calendar name of this deity during the Epiclassic Period was 7 Reptile's Eye, I propose that the unnumbered glyph might have been part of its calendar name in the Teotihuacan period.
Keywords: Teotihuacan; iconography; RE glyph; Butterfly Bird God.

[es] El glifo Ojo de Reptil: el nombre calendárico del Dios Mariposa Pájaro en Teotihuacan y durante el periodo Epiclásico

Resumen. Al inicio de este trabajo se discute cómo distinguir entre deidades y mortales en el arte de Teotihuacan y se presenta el mito del Dios Mariposa Pájaro. Posteriormente, de acuerdo con el análisis de diferentes contextos iconográficos –en los cuales el Dios Mariposa Pájaro se observa–, planteo que el glifo Ojo de Reptil habría funcionado como su nombre. También establezco la existencia de imágenes del Dios Mariposa Pájaro para el período Epiclásico, en las que se encuentra acompañado por el glifo Ojo de Reptil, tales como en la Placa de Ixtapaluca y el Estela 1 de Xochicalco y propongo una nueva interpretación para la tríada de las estelas de Xochicalco. Puesto que el nombre calendárico de esta deidad durante el período Epiclásico fue 7 Ojo de Reptil, propongo que el glifo sin número habría sido parte de su nombre calendárico ya en tiempos de Teotihuacan.
Palabras clave: Teotihuacan; Iconografía; glifo Ojo de Reptil; Dios Mariposa Pájaro.

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1. Introduction

To introduce the reader to the world of the Butterfly Bird God, I will first offer a brief portrait of this god, based on information generated in previous research (Paulinyi 1995, 2006, 2014), and incorporating new data presented in the present article. This deity (Figure 1a) is one of the important gods of the Teotihuacan pantheon, and may be the first of the Teotihuacan deities for whom we have recovered the original name glyph. The igneous nature of the god has been recognised: his body is often painted red and is frequently accompanied by fire signs. He is a sun god, sometimes carrying solar discs, particularly on censers in the Teotihuacan provincial style from Escuintla, Guatemala (Hellmuth 1975: Plate 30; 1993; Berlo 1984: Figures 87, 108; Paulinyi 1995: 87-91 Taube 2005a: Figure 6a). He is associated with plant fertility and is also closely linked with domestic plants: among other evidence, we can cite an exceptional censer with a figure of the god accompanied by maize cobs, squashes, *tortillas*, etc., and probably cotton (Manzanilla and Carreón 1991).

Figure 1. (a) The Butterfly Bird God and the murals of the Palace of the Sun: a) the god in this image shows various of his attributes: butterfly headdress, nose pendant in the form of a geometric butterfly, rectangular eye, rectangular facial painting and hip-cloth (vessel, detail; after Séjourné 1966b: Figure 38, detail).

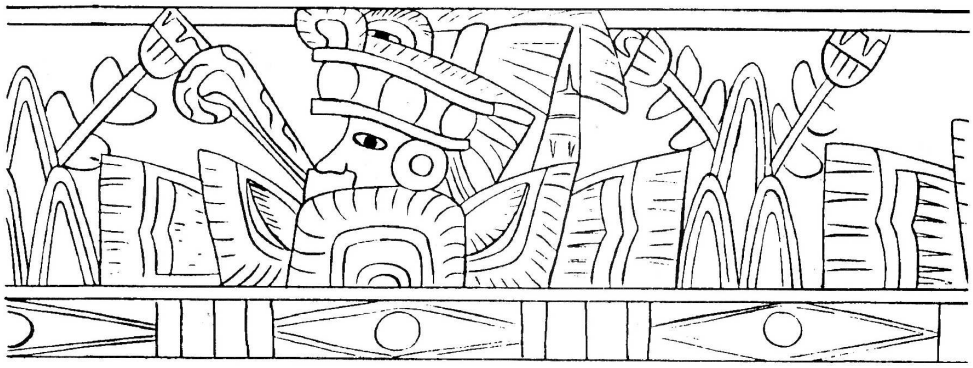
On what basis can we say that these are representations of a god and not of a mortal or different mortals? Firstly, the representations identified as this god "tend to present variable bodies: either an anthropomorphic figure dressed as a butterfly and/or bird, or a compound figure with anthropomorphic head, butterfly wings, sometimes one or two hands, and frequently a circular or semicircular emblem as a torso" (Paulinyi 2022: 153). Secondly, we can propose a reliable criterion for distinguishing between representations of gods and mortals in Teotihuacan art (Paulinyi 2014: 30-31): mortals present offerings to the gods, scattering objects or liquids with one hand and holding a ritual bag in the other; gods on the other hand, like the Rain God (Séjourné 1966a: Plate XCII), the deity in the murals of Tetitla and Tepantitla at Teotihuacan, the Water Goddess (Miller 1973: Figures 301-314; Paulinyi 2007), and

other supernatural beings (Miller 1973: 124, 231) do not present offerings but scatter their gifts to mortals with both hands, and without using a ritual bag. The butterfly bird figures belong to this group: they scatter their gifts like deities (Séjourné 1966b: Figure 130b; de la Fuente 2006: 70, Figure 6.4; Paulinyi 2014: Figure 2; Conides 2018: Figures 5.2, 5.3, 6.25, 6.27), and they do not use the ritual bag used by mortals. This firmly supports the proposal that these figures represent a god, not mortals.

This god is the protagonist of the only Teotihuacan myth that we know. In the murals of the Palace of the Sun in Teotihuacan we see a mythical tree –that we cannot identify safely– from which the Butterfly Bird God, with his unmistakable stepped facial paint, rectangular eye and earflare with hanging ring, descends dressed as a many-headed red macaw (here Figure 1b; Paulinyi 2014: 29-40). In his descent he is accompanied by two little blowgun shooters in Mural 4 of Room 13 (Figure 1c; Nielsen and Helmke 2015). His clothing is a replica of the body of a monstrous, many-headed red macaw, as observed in the murals of Atetelco, Teotihuacan (Figure 1d). The Butterfly Bird God himself appears on several vessels as a blowgun shooter, hunting birds and wearing his butterfly headdress and rectangular facial paint (Figure 1e); or adopting the characteristic half-kneeling position of the blowgun shooter, surrounded by blowgun darts (Pasztory 1988: Figure III.17). The monstrous bird of Atetelco evokes the Popol Vuh when it appears holding an arm in its beak. This bird is closely related to the Principal Bird Deity (the monstrous bird and false sun of the Popol Vuh), which was killed by the twin heroes of the myth – who were blowgun shooters.

Who is the opponent matched with the monstrous bird of Atetelco? What kind of blowgun shooter? The Butterfly Bird God or the two little blowgun shooters can be suggested as the posible killers. There is one piece of evidence that may support the occurrence of a duel between the monstrous bird and the Butterfly Bird God: the arm that the bird carries in its beak, adorned with a bracelet with a "button" (see Figure 1d). This type of bracelet scarcely appears in Teotihuacan art, but when it does, it alludes to the Butterfly Bird God; thus we see the same arm and bracelet in a fragment of a mural on a column in Room 12 of the Palace of the Sun (Mural 5) (Figure 1f), surrounded precisely by the murals cited above of the descent of the Butterfly Bird God. We find it again in Escuintla, on a vessel with a representation of the return of the Butterfly Bird God from the Triple Hill (see below), which originally wore a similar bracelet (Hellmuth 1978: Figure 14). In this context, the feathered red-macaw dress (see Figure 1b) is probably the skin and plumage of the conquered monstrous bird. In a later epoch, a notable case of the appropriation of a vanquished enemy's attributes is that of Huitzilopochtli: after killing his brothers, he tears off their paper crowns to convert them into his own insignia (Florentine Codex 1950-1969, Book 3: 5). Following the same logic, some researchers think that the headdress of the Maya rulers, taking the form of the head and feathers of the Principal Bird Deity, is a replica of the trophy created by Hun Ahau, one of the twin heroes who defeated the god (Nielsen and Helmke 2015; Nielsen *et al.* 2022). In view of this, it is no coincidence that in Atetelco the murals representing the Butterfly Bird Deity and the monstrous bird are found in close proximity, in a small room (Paulinyi 2014: 29-34, Figures 1, 2, 9). It is moreover striking that the monstrous bird wears the RE glyph (see Figure 1d), which –as we shall see– corresponds to the name of the Butterfly Bird God; it would appear to indicate the subordination of the monstrous bird to the god.

Figure 1. (b, c, d, e, f) The Butterfly Bird God and the murals of the Palace of the Sun: b) the Butterfly Bird God, dressed as a many-headed macaw, descending from the mythical tree in the Palacio del Sol (after de la Fuente 2006: Figure 6.4); c) small blowgun shooter–companion of the god (mural 4, Room 13; drawing by Tania Basterrica, after Nielsen and Helmke 2015: Figure 7c); d) the monstrous bird of Atetelco (after Paulinyi 2014: Figure 9); e) the god hunting birds with a blowgun (after Conides 2018: Plate 11); f) arm and bracelet in a fragment of a mural on a column in Room 12 of the Palace of the Sun (Mural 5) (after Miller 1973: Figure 110, detail).



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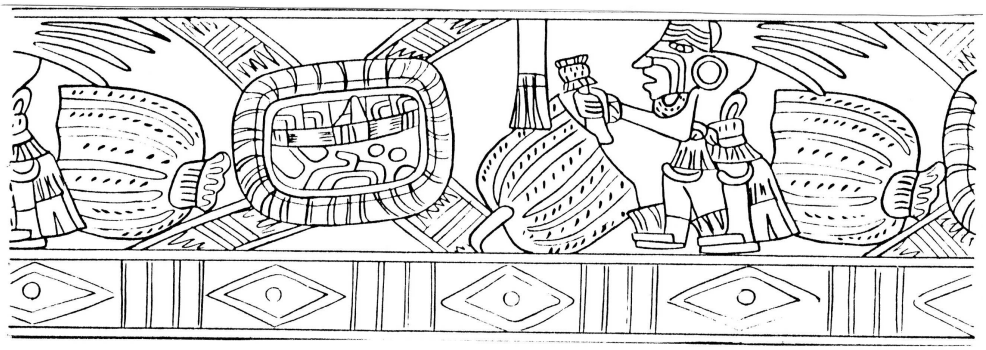

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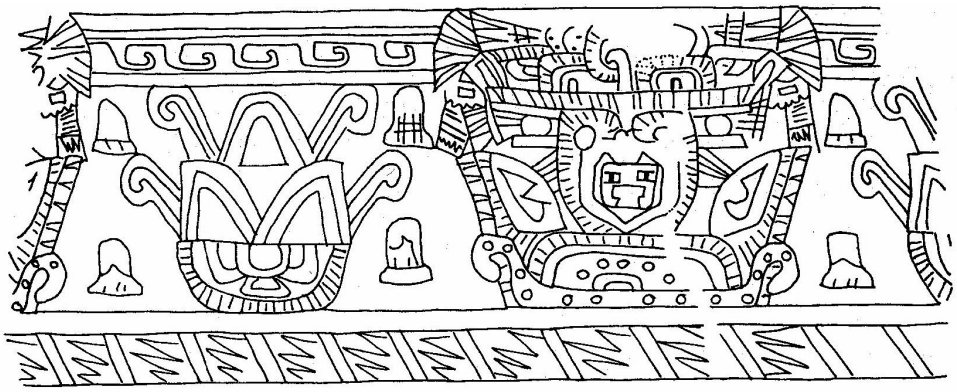


c

Figure 2. (a, b, c) The god in the underworld: a) the god lying with spread wings in the landscape of the Fertile Mountain (after Séjourné 1966b: Figure 94); b) hunchbacked dwarf holding a maraca in the broken squash of the Butterfly Bird God (after Séjourné 1966b: Figure 194); c) the god emerging from the Fertile Mountain with spread wings (after Conides 2018: Figure 4.3c).

Other researchers have suggested that the murals cited represent a complete scene from the Popol Vuh. The personage descending from the tree might be similar or identical to the Principal Bird Deity (or Vucub Caquix in the Postclassic), descending after having been attacked by his killers, the two little blowgun shooters (Nielsen and Helmke 2015). However, I find this idea improbable. In view of all that I have explained above, I consider that the descending figure is not Vucub Caquix or any other monstrous bird of a similar nature, but the Butterfly Bird God who in all likelihood killed him. Turning to the two little blowgun shooters, they are deformed creatures, dwarfs, who do not manifest an aggressive attitude to the descending personage (see Figure 1c). On the contrary, they flank him as they go peacefully about their occupation of hunting birds, even turning their backs on him. They are the recurrent companions of the Butterfly Bird God, as we shall see later. So what then is the meaning of the mural in the Palace of the Sun representing the descent of the Butterfly Bird God? It signifies the descent of the god and his companions into the underworld, death. This is evidenced by the fact that they descend to a maguey plant in the form of a container; this is a symbol of the underworld, since this vessel represents the waters of the underworld. Likewise, the Fertile Mountain (Figure 2a), also located in the underworld, is represented by hills with shapes of maguey leaves.

Figure 2. (d) The god in the underworld: d) the god's two deformed companions on either side of the bust of the god emerging from the underworld (mirror in the Denver Art Museum, after Berrin and Pasztory 1993: No. 81).

The Butterfly Bird God reappears, with a butterfly body, in the underworld, the watery domain of the Rain God, lying inert on the ground with spread wings –suggesting his death–. He is accompanied by the symbol of the Triple Hill, an abbreviation of the Fertile Mountain, linked to the maguey bearing calabashes (see Figure 2a). He is reborn on the Mountain, emerging from a broken squash (Figure 2b) (on a censer from Escuintla, Hellmuth 1978: Figure 3, the god is reborn of a cocoa fruit split open). A hunchbacked dwarf –probably one of his companions– appears in the broken squash from which the god is born, holding a maraca (see Figure 2b). Subsequently he rises from the Fertile Mountain with his fiery strength renewed and crosses the portal of the underworld, frequently flying like a butterfly (Figure 2c), in the culminating moment of his myth. In a beautiful representation of his return from the underworld, in the mirror at the Denver Art Museum, a monumental bust of the god rises from the waters, flanked by his two deformed companions (Figure 2d). At some moment, probably during his stay in the underworld, he is involved in an indeterminate conflict with the Lightning Serpent belonging to the Rain God (as reflected in ceramic pieces from Escuintla with ball-game scenes), from which he emerges victorious (Paulinyi 2014: 44-45).

2. The name of the God

Study of the iconographic complex of the Butterfly Bird God has opened the way to discovery of his name in the form of the Reptile's Eye glyph. The Reptile's Eye, the name given to the glyph by Hermann Beyer (1965), is the most frequently found glyph in Teotihuacan: Hasso von Winning (1961) wrote his fundamental work on this glyph based on almost two hundred examples, and their number has increased since then (Figure 3). Its meaning has been the subject of debate for a century, but no consensus has been reached. We may make reference here to the works of Seler 1915; von Winning 1961Séjourné 1962; Caso 1967; Kubler 1967; Beyer 1965; Langley 1986; López Austin 2009; Helmke and Nielsen 2011 and Taube 2011. George Kubler (1967) was the first to distinguish between the two variants of the Reptile's Eye glyph (RE), calling them "Curl RE" and "Mouth RE". Developing this distinction, James Langley (1986) renamed the two versions of the glyph as RE (Reptile's Eye) and RM (Reptile's Mouth).

Laurette Séjourné (1962: 153-164) remarked that the Reptile's Eye glyph usually appeared with our Butterfly Bird God –considered by this author to be the Teotihuacan version of the Aztec god Xochipilli– but her observation was forgotten. Later, James Langley (1986: 99) remarked on the fact that the RM is observed associated with butterfly symbolism, and investigated a possible martial meaning following the Aztec paradigm of dead warriors whose souls are transformed into butterflies. According to my observations, the butterfly symbolism belongs the Butterfly Bird God (Paulinyi 1995, 2006, 2014) – which is not surprising given the butterfly aspect of this deity– and the Reptile's Eye glyph is frequently observed in his iconography on different supports. These include not only murals –it is represented in two of the three murals in the Palace of the Sun as well as in the Atetelco apartment compound (Figures 4a and b)– but also vessels (see Figures 2b, c; Figures 4c, 5, 6) and censers (see Figure 7).

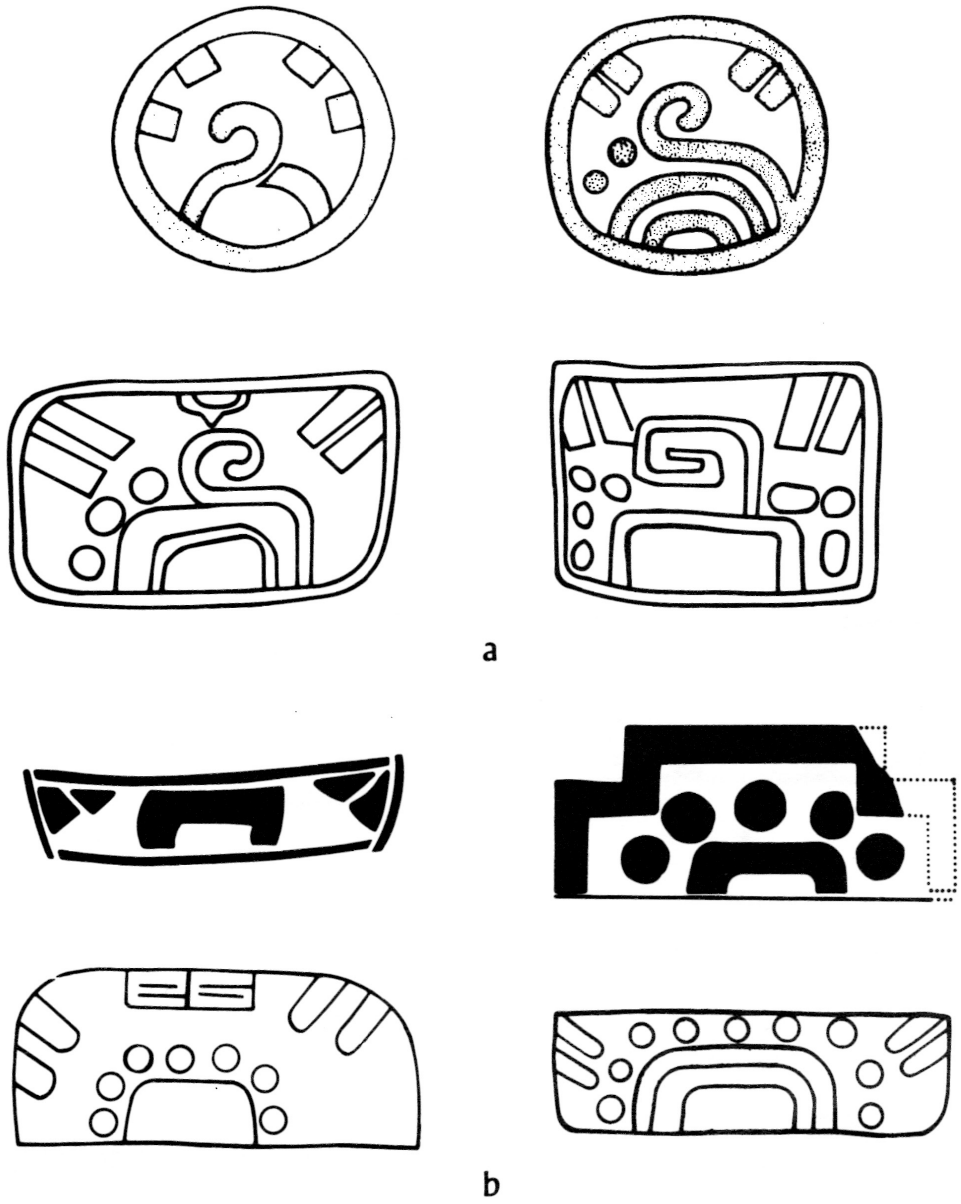
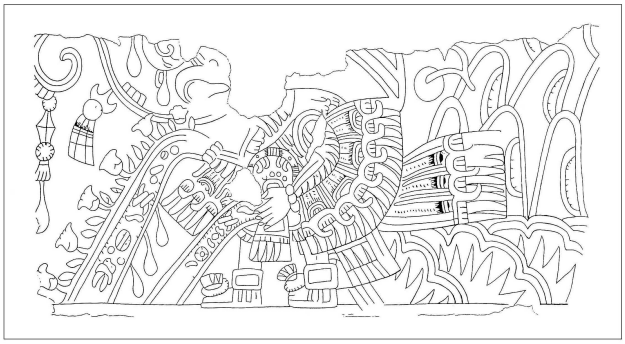


Figure 3. The two versions of the Teotihuacan Reptile's Eye glyph: above the RE glyph, below the RM glyph (after Langley 1991: Figure 14).

a



b

c

Figure 4. The RE glyph on the Butterfly Bird God's body: a) the god with a RM glyph as his torso, emerging from a symbolic vessel that represents the underworld. "Los Glifos" mural in the Palace of the Sun, Teotihuacan (after Langley 1993: Figure 8, detail); b) the god wears a RM glyph as a pectoral and a loincloth and hip-cloth. Mural at Atetelco, Teotihuacan (after Paulinyi 2014: Figure 2); c) the god with a headdress of three RE glyphs (after López Luján *et al*. 2002: Figure 8.8).

The Butterfly Bird God appears on censers from both Teotihuacan and Escuintla. In Teotihuacan, the most frequent form of these ceramic pieces are the "theatre type" censers, which bear a mask representing the Butterfly Bird God in their centre. The mask shows a face with some of the characteristic facial attributes mentioned above, and his nose pendant in the form of a geometric butterfly (see Figure 1a). In many cases, the iconographic components on censers belong to this deity; the Reptile's Eye glyph appears principally in the rectangular plaques called *mantas* (see Figure 7). Although these censers are traditionally considered to be representations of living or dead warriors with their respective attributes (see von Winning 1987; Langley 1998; Sugiyama 1998; Taube 2002 and Headrick 2003), I suggest that the identification of the central figure as the Butterfly Bird God could form the backbone of a new proposal.

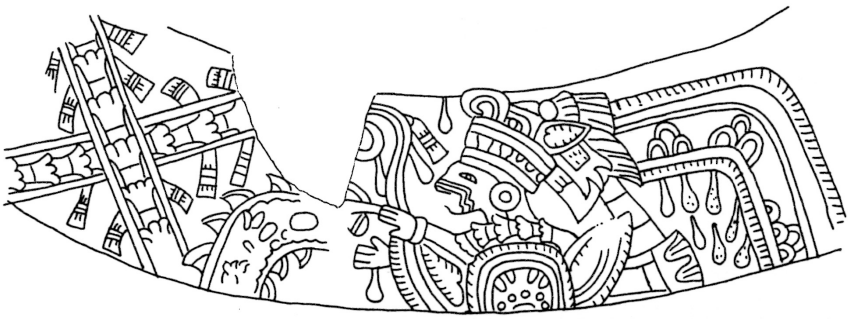


Figure 5. The Butterfly Bird God bears a RM glyph as his torso as he emerges with spread wings from the portal of the underworld (after Taube 2006: Figure 7b).

On the murals and vessels mentioned above, the Butterfly Bird God generally has the RM glyph replacing his torso (Figure 5; see Figures 2b, 2c, 4a), but it may also take the form of a pectoral (see Figure 4b), or may appear in his headdress, exceptionally in the form of a RE glyph (see Figure 4c). In two cases, the god does not bear the glyph but is accompanied by it (see Figure 6; Evans 2010: Plates 7a-b). Three decades ago, James Langley (1986: Table 21) remarked on the association between the RM and anthropomorphic beings. At that time he detected six cases; today we can cite twice as many. All the images are representations of the Butterfly Bird God, except for two of mortals (Kidder *et al.* 1946: Figures 174d-d´; Berrin and Pasztory 1993: Plate 141; Paulinyi 2022); the latter have the RM in place of a torso and possess some attributes of the god, as well as the assemblage consisting of feathered bundle and shield, attributes commonly carried by high-ranking lords of Teotihuacan (see e.g. Miller 1973: Figure 204; Berrin and Pasztory 1993: Nos. 139 and 140). The complete list of the pieces showing the Butterfly Bird God with the RM glyph is as follows: Séjourné 1966b: Figure 94; Trésors du Nouveau Monde 1992: Figure 123; Langley 1993: Figure 8; Taube 2006: Figure 7b; Evans 2010: Plates7a-b, Figure 8; Paulinyi 2014: Figure 2; Robb 2017: Nos. 8 and 9; Conides 2018: Figures 4.2, 4.3a-c; Kerr: No. 6253.

When we observe the Butterfly Bird God being born from a broken squash in the underworld, his torso is a RM glyph (Kerr: No. 6253). In another image of the deity he is emerging from the portals of the underworld, while in a strip below the main image the broken squash can be seen with the RM glyph between the two halves (see

Figure 6; see also Figure 2b). This is a symbolic representation of the rebirth of the god, in which he is substituted by the glyph. The latter case, and the frequent cases in which this glyph replaces the god's torso, clearly show that the Reptile's Eye glyph and the Butterfly Bird God mean the same, i.e. the glyph is the name of the god. The Reptile's Eye glyphs on censers from Escuintla –which are all of the RE glyph with a single exception where the RM glyph appears (Hellmuth 1975, jacket)– must have functioned in the same way, frequently forming the torso or pectoral in the image of the Butterfly Bird God, as well as appearing in his headdress (Hellmuth 1975: Plates 25-28, 32-33, 37; Berlo 1984: Plate 86; Bove 2002: Figure 11). It seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the Reptile's Eye glyphs on these censers also signified the name of the god.

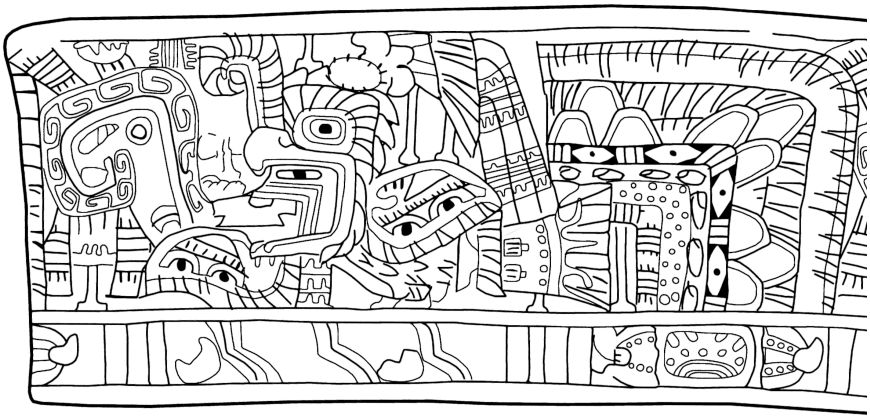


Figure 6. The Butterfly Bird God emerges with spread wings from the portal of the underworld. The RM glyph appears in the lower fringe between two halves of a squash (after Evans 2010: Figure 8).

But what kind of name glyph would this be? Hasso von Winning (1987, II: 73-74) proposed that the Reptile's Eye in Teotihuacan would not be the name of a day in the calendar, since in the compendium of this glyph that he published (von Winning 1961) none of the examples is accompanied by a numeral. However, more recently Karl Taube (2011: 78-84) –who has proposed the identification of nine of the twenty names of Teotihuacan days– included the Reptile's Eye among them, since although the Reptile's Eye does not normally appear accompanied by a numeral, there are at least two cases –not with a representation of the god but in other contexts– in which there are numerals with the glyph: 3 and 4 respectively (Taube 2011: 81-82, Figure 5.3a, d). Thus the question arises: when the glyph appears as the name of the Butterfly Bird God, is this part of the god's calendar name, but for some reason without the numerical coefficient?

3. The God during the Epiclassic Period

Fortunately we have an emblematic image from the Epiclassic Period (600-900 AD), from the Central Highlands, which supports our proposal that the Reptile's Eye glyph functioned as the name of the Butterfly Bird God, corroborating its status

as a calendar name and probably providing the absent numeral. This image is the famed Ixtapaluca Plaque, which represents a deity with a headdress in the form of a serpent's head (Figure 8). Traditionally the deity has been called the 7 Reptile's Eye Goddess, because its clothing appears to be female and it bears the calendar name 7 Reptile's Eye on its breast. The appearance of the Reptile's Eye glyph is not exceptional, since during the Epiclassic it is one of the most frequent calendar glyphs. The consensus among those who have studied the Ixtapaluca Plaque (Beyer 1965; Caso 1967; Pasztory 1976 and von Winning 1987) is that it represents a fertility goddess, or the Maize Goddess herself.

In contraposition to this thesis, we would argue that the figure in the Ixtapaluca Plaque shows diagnostic characteristics of the Butterfly Bird God, such as stepped facial painting, the nose pendant in the shape of a geometric butterfly (see Figure 1a) and the Reptile's Eye glyph on the torso (in the RE version). Although the clothing observed in the image would appear at first to indicate female gender, it is in fact the characteristic dress in which the Butterfly Bird God appears on some occasions in Teotihuacan art (see Figures 1a and 4b). In the centre can be seen the front end of the loincloth, and on either side a piece of textile with a fringed lower edge; this is probably a hip-cloth, an item of male dress used in Mesoamerica (Anawalt 1981). As can be seen in the Plaque and in representations of the Butterfly Bird God in Teotihuacan, the textiles represented here could be the end of the loincloth arranged over the hip-cloth –exactly as appears in Postclassical images, especially in the representations of the Mixtec codices and the Borgia Codex group (Anawalt 1981: 102-103, 150-154)–.

In contrast to the image of the Butterfly Bird God on the Ixtapaluca Plaque, in Teotihuacan this deity is not associated with a serpent headdress, nor is he known to raise his hands as we see in Figure 8. However on a ceramic from Escuintla, the Butterfly Bird God is making a similar gesture (Hellmuth 1993). The upward pointing of the hands may perhaps allude to the episode in the myth in which the deity ascends from the underworld. On the other side, our god –in the underworld – conquers the Lightning Serpent, a supernatural being which I identified some years ago (Paulinyi 1997, 2014). The serpent headdress in the Ixtapaluca Plaque – with its nose pointing upwards – represents the head of the same serpent. In fact Karl Taube identified this headdress as a representation of his War Serpent (Taube 1992), which corresponds to the Lightning Serpent in my proposal. In some Maya images of the Late Classical Period, this serpent wears a plume of feathers and a crest on its head, and elongated motifs coming out of its nose, just like the headdress in the Ixtapaluca Plaque (see Taube 1992: Figures 7a, c, 8a, 12).

When the Butterfly Bird God appears emerging from the underworld, he sometimes presents motifs alluding to this place and its supernatural inhabitants. Examples of this can be found on some censers from Escuintla, in which the Butterfly Bird God wears the teeth and upper lip of the Rain God in his butterfly headdress (Hellmuth 1975: Plates 26, 27, 30, 31, 33) as he emerges with spread wings from the vessel which represents the waters of the underworld (Paulinyi 2014: 38-39). Since both the butterfly headdress with the teeth of the Rain God and the butterfly with the same teeth are observed, albeit rarely, in Teotihuacan art (Seler 1915: 515; Berlo 1984: Plate 44), the place of origin of the Escuintla icon must be Teotihuacan (Figure 7). For this reason the appearance of the Lighting Serpent, a supernatural animal belonging to the Rain God, as the headdress of the Butterfly Bird God is not in the least

surprising. This explains why the bust of the Butterfly Bird God represented on the mirror in the Denver Art Museum, shown rising from the waters of the underworld, wears the emblem of the Rain God on its breast (see Figure 2d). Finally, it should be noted that the outer part of the frame round the deity in the Plaque is decorated with small tassels which have been interpreted as maize tassels (von Winning 1987, I: 157). The appearance of maize tassels associated with the Butterfly Bird God should also not surprise us, since this deity was related with domestic plants and food.

Figure 7. Detail of a Teotihuacan "theatre-type" censer (after Berrin and Pasztory 1993: No. 68). RE glyphs can be observed in the lower border of the *mantas* and in the side panel.

In the Epiclassic Period we can identify more images of the Butterfly Bird God in the Central Highlands. Thus he appears in Xochicalco Stela 1 with the same calendar name, 7 Reptile's Eye, and the same type of Lightning Serpent headdress as in the Ixtapaluca Plaque, including the elongated motifs (see Figure 11a.a). Although in this stela the god is not wearing his facial paint and geometric butterfly nose pendant, the presence of his name is decisive for his identification as the Butterfly Bird God. Moreover, he may appear in different forms in the styles associated with the Epiclassic: below we will see a version from Cacaxtla. In Stela 1 the god's bust appears in an inverted-U frame which encloses a mouth with teeth, and is closed at the

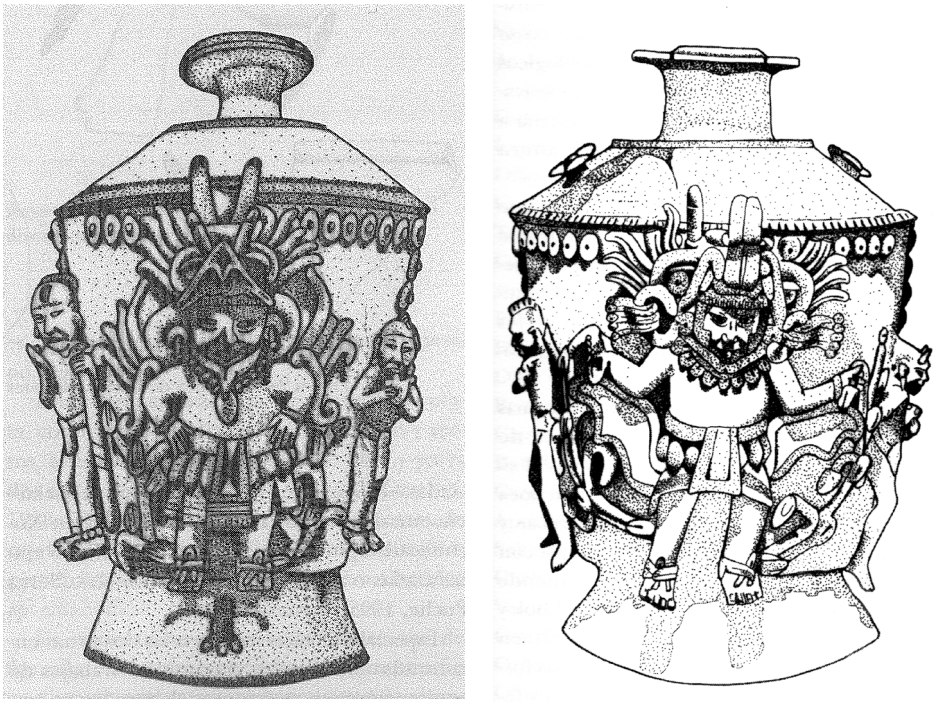
bottom by two hands. In an earlier work I proposed that this symbolic assemblage and the similar ones in Teotihuacan represent the earth as a living creature (Paulinyi 2007); in this case this might refer to the emergence of the Butterfly Bird God from the underworld, as in the image on the Ixtapaluca Plaque (Figure 8). Hasso von Winning identified the Teotihuacan "comb-and-bar" fire sign (Figure 9) inside the Reptile's Eye glyph of Stela 1 (von Winning 1987, II: 16-19, 77), together with three identical signs on the three sides of the inverted U. These signs, like the Teotihuacan representations of the emergence of our god from the underworld (see Figures 2c, 4a, 5, 6), denote the renewal of his fiery strength as he emerges.

Figure 8. The Butterfly Bird God in the Ixtapaluca Plaque (after Caso 1967: 158).

Cacaxtla also has images of the Butterfly Bird God. They were found on three similar urns, two of which are almost intact. We can recognise the dress of the principal figure as being bird on one of these two urns and butterfly on the other (Figure 10a-b); Delgadillo 2006: 118-119; Nagao 2014: 275-278). On both urns the figure is accompanied by two cocoa trees and two deformed figures with blowguns, one of whom is blowing a sea-shell trumpet (Figure 10a). The two figures are the two blowgun shooters who accompany the god in one of the murals in the Palace of the Sun, and elsewhere. Turner (2021) also links them with the two companions on the Denver Art Museum mirror, thinking that they represent the Aztec god Xochipilli and a maize god. The Butterfly Bird God (Figure 10b), dressed as a butterfly on one of the two Cacaxtla vessels, is clearly wearing a hip-cloth with a loincloth on top (see

Figure 8), which supports my interpretation of the dress of the deity on the Ixtapaluca Plaque, and also in Teotihuacan. With respect to Cacaxtla, it should be noted that the 7 RE glyph by itself cannot be identified as the name of the Butterfly Bird God –to do so it must appear together with the god's image–. At Cacaxtla, the 7 RE glyph appears twice on the north jamb and south jamb of Structure A, accompanied by two figures (Brittenham 2015: Figures 279-280); however, neither of them is identical to the Butterfly Bird God. Nor can it be said that the 7 RE glyph that appears on Stela 1 of Piedra Labrada, Veracruz (Caso 1967: 149-153; von Winning 1987, II: 76-77; Taube 2000: 45; 2011: 81-82), is the god's name: it is not accompanied by an image of the deity.

Figure 9. The Teotihuacan "comb-and-bar" fire sign (after von Winning 1987, II, cap. 2: Figure 4, detail).



a b

Figure 10. The Cacaxtla urns: a) the Butterfly Bird God with the attributes of a bird (after Delgadillo 2006: Figure 26); b) the Butterfly Bird God with the attributes of a butterfly on the other Cacaxtla urn, wearing a loincloth and hip-cloth (after Delgadillo 2006: Figure 27).

4. The myth of the God at Xochicalco

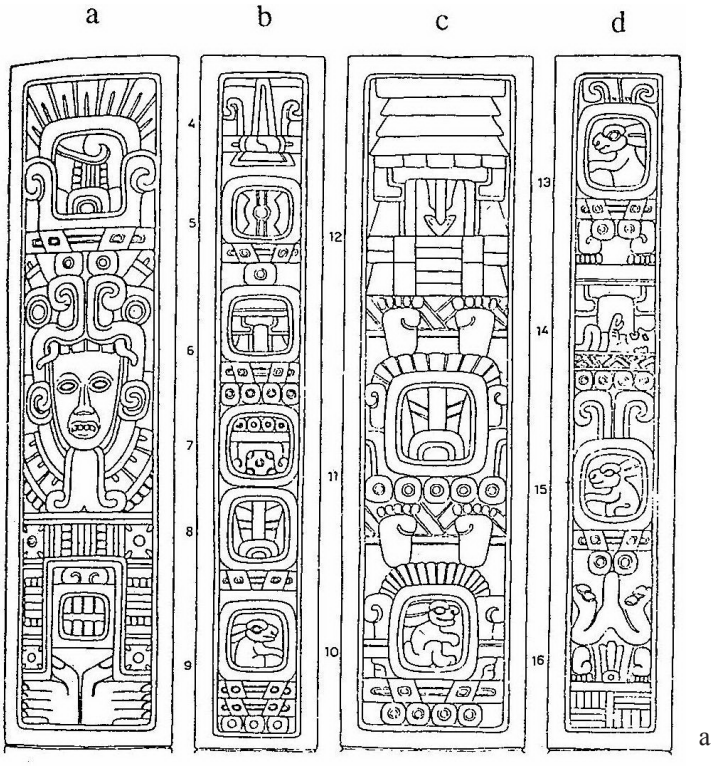
Various interpretations have been offered for the Xochicalco triad of stelae (Figures 11 a, b, c). Critical discussion of these interpretations would require a separate article; here I only mention briefly the different proposals that have been published. The figures on the front face of each of these three stelae have been interpreted either as rulers (Berlo 1989; Hirth 2000; Smith 2000; see also Urcid 2007) or as deities (Piña Chan 1972, 1989; Pasztory 1976; Taube 2002). My proposal belongs to the second group. In contrast to my approach, all the proposals to date which have considered these figures to be deities depend to a greater or lesser degree on later evidence. Román Piña Chan claimed that the triad represents the Quetzalcóatl myth: in Stela 1 emerging from the underworld in the form of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, and in Stela 3 descending (Figure 11a, Figure 11b). His interpretation was strongly criticised by Alfredo López Austin (1994). Esther Pasztory proposed that Stela 1 shows a goddess of earth and fertility, and possibly of the moon, the wife of the Sun God; the latter would have had the Aztec name of 4 Movement on Stela 3, where he is shown descending to the underworld to die and subsequently be reborn. Finally, Karl Taube tries to apply the Aztec myth of the creation of the sun and the moon in Teotihuacan to the triad, claiming that Stela 1 shows the moon deity.

What can we say about the meaning of the Xochicalco triad if we take the presence of the Butterfly Bird God emerging from the underworld in Stela 1 as our starting point? It is known that the Rain god appears in Stela 2 (Figure 11c). Since in the myth the Butterfly Bird God descends to the underworld –the watery domain of the Rain God– from which he emerges reborn, the question arises whether the appearance of these two gods together in Stelae 1 and 2 might refer to this myth. I would suggest that this is indeed the case; the myth of the Butterfly Bird God survived in the Central Highlands during the Epiclassic: we have seen representations of this god, together with cocoa trees and accompanied by the two companions mentioned previously, on urns from Cacaxtla. The myth could therefore have served as the basis for the iconographic programme of the Xochicalco triad of stelae.

Which deity is shown in the image on Stela 3? Could it be drawn from the same myth? Everything indicates that it could. In view of the notable similarities observable (although the figures are not identical) between the deities represented on Stelae 1 and 3 (face, serpent headdress, pectoral, the inverted-U motif and the basic structure of the back face of the stelae [image of a temple and two large glyphs, alternating with a pair of feet]), we may suppose that these represent two different manifestations of the Butterfly Bird God. Indeed, the Butterfly Bird God has two manifestations: the deity who descends to the underworld, and the resurrected deity who emerges. If Stela 1 shows his resurrection, then in Stela 3 we may be seeing his descent. Although the images carved on the front faces of the three stelae have been interpreted previously as the descent and return of deities from the underworld (Piña Chan 1972, 1989; Pasztory 1976), my proposal differs from these: I postulate the presence of a deity who has not been considered by other researchers, and offer new arguments.

What arguments support my interpretation? Firstly, the inverted-U motif (the underworld) below the face of the god represented on Stela 3 does not bear

the comb-and-bar fire signs of the emerging god on Stela 1, but *quincrosses*, a Teotihuacan sign for earth and water, together with a sign that evokes the reticulation that covers the body of important supernatural.jaguars in Teotihuacan, associated with water (von Winning 1968, 1987, I: 101-104; Pasztory 1997: 182-197; Taube 2000: 28). Quincrosses and reticulation or net signs appear together at Teotihuacan as well (von Winning 1987, I: 104). All this gives the figure of the god represented on Stela 3 an aquatic profile, consistent with the Butterfly Bird God in his descent. A probable analogy for the deity represented on Stelae 1 and 3 at Xochicalco can be found in two of the murals at the Palace of the Sun in Teotihuacan, which show the Butterfly Bird God respectively descending to (see Figure 1b), and emerging from the underworld (see Figure 4a). When the god –this time with a butterfly headdress– emerges from the underworld in one of these murals, his figure is covered with the same comb-and-bar fire signs that are associated with the deity depicted on Stela 1, also emerging from the underworld. In the other mural at the Palace of the Sun, the Butterfly Bird God is descending to the underworld dressed as a bird and covered with aquatic motifs (starfish and strips of water); this aquatic nature is shared with the god on Stela 3.



a

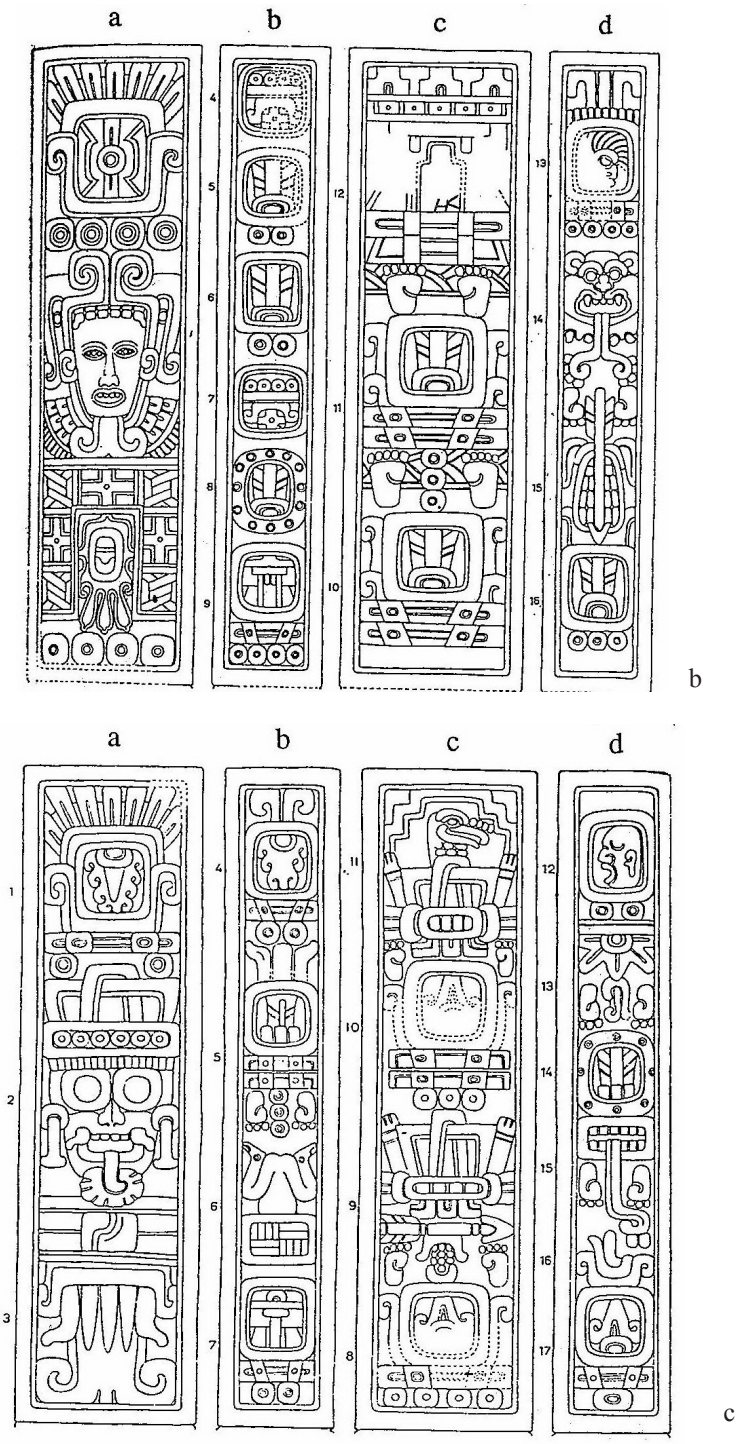


Figure 11. The Xochicalco triad of stelae: a) Stela 1; b) Stela 3; c) Stela 2 (after Berlo 1989: Figure 15, details).

5. Conclusion

Our search for the name of the god leads us to the conclusion that if the Ixtapaluca Plaque represents the Butterfly Bird God wearing 7 Reptile's Eye on his breast to signify his name, and the same god is found in Teotihuacan with the same glyph in the same position –either as his torso or as a pectoral– this would corroborate the proposal that this glyph was the Teotihuacan name of the Butterfly Bird God. Taking as a basis the calendar character for the name of the Butterfly Bird God in the Ixtapaluca Plaque, his Teotihuacan name must also be calendar-related; and although we cannot prove this suggestion, it is possible that the complete name in Teotihuacan would also have been 7 Reptile's Eye.

The theatre-type censers of Teotihuacan bear a row of *mantas*, arranged below the mask of the Butterfly Bird God. In the majority of cases, the *mantas* show –to use the terms defined by James Langley (1986: 153-171)– a Panel Cluster, consisting of an assemblage of symbols with calendar-related connotations (Manta Compound), and frequently a Reptile's Eye glyph in two versions (see Figure 7). Considering that the central image on the censers is the god's mask, it is probable that these glyphs also serve to name him. Besides, we have seen that the Reptile's Eye glyph appears on the Escuintla censers, almost always in the RE variant, naming the Butterfly Bird God. Consequently the same glyph present on the Teotihuacan censers is hardly likely to have a different meaning. The joint appearance of the Butterfly Bird God, the Reptile's Eye glyph and the Manta Compound is not restricted to the censers (see Figure 4a), and raises the question whether this may not refer to some event in the Teotihuacan calendar connected with the Butterfly Bird God. However, exploration of the answer to that question is outside the scope of this work.

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